

MARCH 7, 1961

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# THE GREAT CUBAN SPY CAPER PART TWO

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*This is what it's like to be one of the stars in an international show trial. First an ulcerous month in solitary. Then a charge sheet calling for the death penalty. And at the end a weird confession that got me off but made everybody else from Fidel Castro to the CIA sound like figments of a plot by Ian Fleming about the least-secret agents of all time*

## HIS CONFESSION (1) CLEARED ME (2) THICKENED THE PLOT

BY WILLIAM MILNE

As told to Barbara Moon

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On Oct. 24, 1963, Ronald Lippert and I were seized by Cuban counterintelligence agents at the customs counter in the Havana airport. The charge: smuggling in twenty-five pounds of explosives in tins marked "papaya in syrup." The tins were in Lippert's personal baggage.

I had got to know Lippert in 1961-62 when we were both flying Canadian livestock on the "chicken run" to Cuba. In the summer of 1963 he came to Toronto with an inviting business proposition. He was now married to a Cuban chorus girl and living in Miami, and the scheme

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revolved around his "contacts" among the anti-Castro exile group there. The exiles were keen to get food parcels to relatives still in Cuba. A Canadian air-freight service, since it could legally run the U.S. blockade, could make a handy profit by setting up an order-by-number office in Miami but flying the actual food direct from Toronto. I found backers, among them William Garfat of Aurora, Ont.

Lippert refused to introduce the backers to his Miami contacts but otherwise, on three separate trips to Cuba to seek government clearance, we noticed nothing suspicious. We certainly thought nothing of it when Lippert took along groceries once "for his wife's relatives in Havana."

Then Lippert leased Garfat's private plane to go to Havana on personal business. I flew it down from Toronto on Oct. 22, 1963.